

# ΕΜΒΟΕΣ

**the return of...**

(or trying once more to build an opera house)





the return of...

I won't beat about the bush. Emvoes (greek word for tinnitus) is the transformation of my former newsletter absurd (1996-2010). It started as an idea around fall 2012 and its first issue was printed sometime in fall 2013, early 2014. The name was coined by a friend who called a meeting of friends under this name during the summer of 2013, in a house in my village in Central Greece. Until 2019 the fanzine was written in Greek. But since the depression of lockdown and various other disasters, the coronavirus caused the old insanity of absurd's hayday to come into surface, and while awaiting to move to the city of Thessaloniki, willing also a new change, the idea of turning it into an english-written zine and trying to keep its edition as frequent as possible came into mind. So here it is. Another journey starts then, not knowing how long it will last, or where it will get me (and those who will sail with me) to.

The title is lifted from the eponymous  
Durutti Column LP (Fact 14)

εμβοές the return of...  
(or trying once more to build an opera house)

**(introduction)**

- 1. Falt**
- 2. Superpang**
- 3. Colin Webster**
- 4. Alice Kemp**
- 5. The story of San Miguel del Bala by Anthony Milton**
- 6. Neda Mehrjoo**
- 7. Trials and tribulations of releasing music by George Mizithras**

**(epilogue by orl (orilarecords.bandcamp.com)**

The Alice Kemp interview was conducted by Manolis Pappas  
(coherentstates.bandcamp.com)

Text editing was done by Kostis Kilymis  
(rekemrecords.bandcamp.com, kostiskilymis.com)

Front cover photo : k.atou, shot by Miltiadis Merentitis.

Designed by Giorgos Amarantidis  
(giorgosamarantidis.com)

issuu.com/emvoes  
noise-below.bandcamp.com  
rekemrecords.bandcamp.com





There are times that I feel like Herzog's Fitzcarraldo. A figure that in the last few years, owing to a number of experiences (and with the passing of time) has become one of my most beloved heroes.

Sometimes I have a crazy idea that comes into my mind and want to give life to it, but everything goes wrong and situations make the conditions for the materialisation of my dreams so shit, as if the fates are laughing at me, and like Ulysses (another of my looong time heroes) I end up completely destroyed, devastated and back to zero, where my journey had initially started. Without ever considering though of abandoning my dreams, I start working on the materialisation of another idea.

Like Fitzcarraldo then, some 20 years ago I dreamt of moving back to my village, located at an altitude of 1.100m up in the mount of Ghion, to run my newsletter absurd and its releases from there. A small mail order mostly to cover expenses, as all I needed was an internet connection (back then in its very hybrid form, the 56k modem kind) and to rent a PO Box in the post office of the province's capital which was something like an hour's drive by car from my home. Live up there like a hermit listening to music, reading and slowly turning my house into a cabinet of curiosities, open for friends to come and stay, perform, and do whatever they enjoyed.

It would take a book to spell out what went wrong, and how dreams faded away and everything collapsed. It seemed easier to carry a ship over a mountain (as in Fitzcarraldo) than to realise my dream, until in 2007 I took the decision to move to and stay forever in my ever beloved city of Thessaloniki, as my family had roots there too. But also the various disasters that were taking place in my life (at that time I was living in Athens) had by then

also led to the creation of a group of friends in Thessaloniki and Northern Greece, with whom we had started setting up various events, mostly house concerts, etc. So the cabinet of curiosities (like Fitzcarraldo's opera house) in the middle of nowhere might have remained a dream, but lots of other things were happening in the meantime.

I need another book to describe the collapse of all my dreams for it. There were times I felt like a protagonist of a Woody Allen film (especially upon arriving permanently to Thessaloniki where the situations I encountered in the first month of my return there gave me this impression so strongly). Nevertheless, I finally managed, after an odyssey of almost 15 years, to move to the city. Completely broke, and with my life torn to pieces. Like Fitzcarraldo though, new dreams were born...

In between the two disasters, accidentally started a fanzine which was born out of the ashes of an extremely short lived idea for a fanzine a friend had dropped. The idea evaporated, but the material we had gathered was there, so I started working on it for a fanzine whose name I hadn't chosen yet, but wanted it to be a small volume around cassette culture as seen from an autobiographical perspective.

I was actually looking for a new vehicle with which to transform the ideas of my newsletter absurd, which had ceased to exist back in 2010, and wanted to see an evolution of its ideas that had remained unrealised. While working on the material, I realised that I had enough of it that could easily stand as a separate issue of the 'zine which I did.

The name was coined after a meeting at the house in my village, where since 2013 I had been bringing over friends from time to time to perform, hang around, etc. A friend came and brought some ten tapes he had assembled as a gift to all the people who were visiting the house. The tapes were housed in various boxes with all kinds of rubbish you could imagine inside them, and a note calling them 'emvoes', the Greek word for tinnitus. I liked the name and kept it for my zine. It took a lot of discussion with friends whether the zine should be in Greek or English, but since the cassette culture idea had started in Greek, it was the decision at that time to keep publishing it infrequently in that language.

But as said before, upon landing in Thessaloniki - and just like Fitzcarraldo, new ideas were born, so I felt that it was time for a change, and that I should use this already existing vehicle as the fanzine that would resume from the point where absurd departed in 2010.

So here it is... I really don't know to which uncharted oceans of sound this journey will get me to this time, but like Fitzcarraldo I know that upon my return (like the previous two times) I won't be the same man.

Enjoy!

Thessaloniki, September 2022.  
Nicolas Malevitis



# Falt

I came across falt a few years ago thanks to the release of Costis Drygianakis's stellar tape 'Chained to the world'. It was a tape housed in a plain colour print, folded like an envelope. That was all. A simple collage and amazing sounds! I then realised that I had already seen the name featured in Vital Weekly by Frans de Waard, but as loads of information from various sources runs through my brain everyday, I realised I had 'shelved' it in one of my mind's corridors.

With the passing of time though, I started visiting its bandcamp page more often to listen to releases, even buy tapes, and that I was getting familiar with its sound. So in October 2021 I asked Christian who runs it if he would like to do an interview around it.

# EMBOÉS

**How did you come up with the idea of starting your own label and when did you start 'falt'?  
How about the sounds you enjoy releasing?**

Falt started like so many other labels I think. I just had made new recordings myself (Chemiefaserwerk) and wanted to release them. But instead of putting it on my own Bandcamp I thought it would be nice to start something new, some small imprint, I had a bunch of tapes left from another project, 28 tapes in fact, so this set the edition number. I always make editions of 30, and since I had only the tapes but no cases I thought about the packaging for a moment and found that some of my collages I do would make a nice paper cover which I could wrap around the tape. This all happened kind of quick with no real further thinking. I dubbed all tapes with the tape deck I had at the time and printed the covers in a small print shop nearby, I set up the Bandcamp page and was very very happy with the result. As it turned out a few people really liked the tape and the label idea and so I went on. I actually never thought it would be the thing it is today.

Today people contact me, send in demos and I have a real nice group of people who I enjoy working with and I occasionally ask them if they want to do another Falt tape, but in the beginning I had no idea of running a label and so I reached out to people I listened to myself at that moment and it turned out they all were pretty great humans and they trusted me with releasing some of the music they had made. Today I listen a lot to music which is sent in from people I don't know, there is so much good stuff out there and I surely can not release all these awesome things, I think Falt already has a quite high pace if one could say so when it comes to new tapes, haha. I am preparing the new batch right now and I say to myself: Hey it is just one month ago that the last batch dropped, maybe I should slow down a bit. But that is a great thing with the small editions, you can have a bunch of releases, all so different and sold out quite fast and people are enjoying it and I think I also love it that way. If I would release let's say editions of 100 I would probably slow down a lot on it haha.

If you listen to the Falt catalogue you can pretty much tell what I like, I have never released a tape which was not some music I did not listen to myself on a daily basis. I clearly listen to many other things too, but Falt represents the experimental music aspect in my life, I mean I would not release a jazz tape on Falt even though I listen to this kind of music a lot.

**Could you please give some brief information about the idea of falt radio?**

Faltradio just happened like Falt did too. I made a mix for a radio show I was asked to do and I sort of just got into it. The idea is pretty simple, I make a mix every week, never longer than 30 minutes, so for a radio show it's kind of short, I upload it to wetransfer and post the link. I have also started a substack for Faltradio, so people can subscribe and get the notification mail with the new episode every weekend, the download is only available for one week due to restrictions from wetransfer and I like that, so every week there is a new episode, and the other one is gone, and this will continue for the whole year of 2021! This is my year of Faltradio, people can share the downloaded file and I hope some of them are doing it, but I will not provide an archive or a Mixcloud site for Faltradio, once the week is over, it's gone. I mean I have my folder on my desktop labelled Faltradio but I don't count on making it permanently available online. And this is for sure not a bad thing, these mixes are really weird sometimes, there are the quite less noisy ones, the noisy ones and everything in between. It's kind of a short weekly label showcase, there are always at least 3 different releases running simultaneously and I know it is sometimes a lot. For me it is great not only to reconnect with the releases, before starting the radio show I hadn't listened to some of them for years, but it is also such a great thing to hear these pieces of music interact with each other! By starting Faltradio I realised how much of a distinctive sound there is in this catalogue of awesome music and how much these different sounds connect with each other, it really blows my mind every time, haha.

**If there's something i like a lot in falt's universe is the totally diy aesthetics of the covers of your releases. Sometimes they remind me of To Live And Shave In L.A.'s Tom Smith's 'Karl Schmidt Verlag' packaging to be honest, or other**

**related tape labels. How was falt's packaging idea born? Do you design the covers or can the artists also contribute their ideas?**

Oh I think I already touched that question earlier on. The packaging was born because I had no cases when I first started the label, haha. I said this in another interview: I am actually quite a simple person. You know that the name Falt comes from the German word "falten" which means to fold", and yes here we are, I fold some of my collages and artworks I make around the tapes. Since quite some time I do collages and very simple drawings, I am not really good with drawings actually so I love machines and other things to help me, that's why I love typewriters so much and stencils! I made fanzines when I was younger and at the university and sold them on punk concerts back in Berlin, but the punks never really liked my stupid collaged fanzine with a lot of poems in them haha, so if I think about it I always end up by saying: Hey yes I mean I do this since ever and all the time, and it's kind of my thing. I also had some years which were besides making music entirely dedicated to analogue photography. I never went out without a loaded camera, taking pictures everywhere, actual film, so 10 years ago in Berlin I had a handful of films developed every week and it gave me a lot of material for what I do now and for what I did back then. Shoeboxes full of prints, trees, buildings, structures, garbage, the sky, not so many people haha. Most of the covers are made by me, real size, so when you have the cover unfolded in your hands you look at the same thing as I do, that is a copy of the original. I think it is both easy to make and it comes very naturally if one could use such a word for making art. There are also covers (like the Leo Okagawa tape and also his duo with Ayami Suzuki) where I use photographs taken by the artists, the Jeph Jerman tape is made from pictures he had taken on site where he recorded some of the sounds used on the tape. Pablo Picco sent me a few photographs last week; and I also had my friend Björn Keller drawing the cover for the John Sellekars tape.

**Any specific falt releases you like more and to which you return more often or not?**

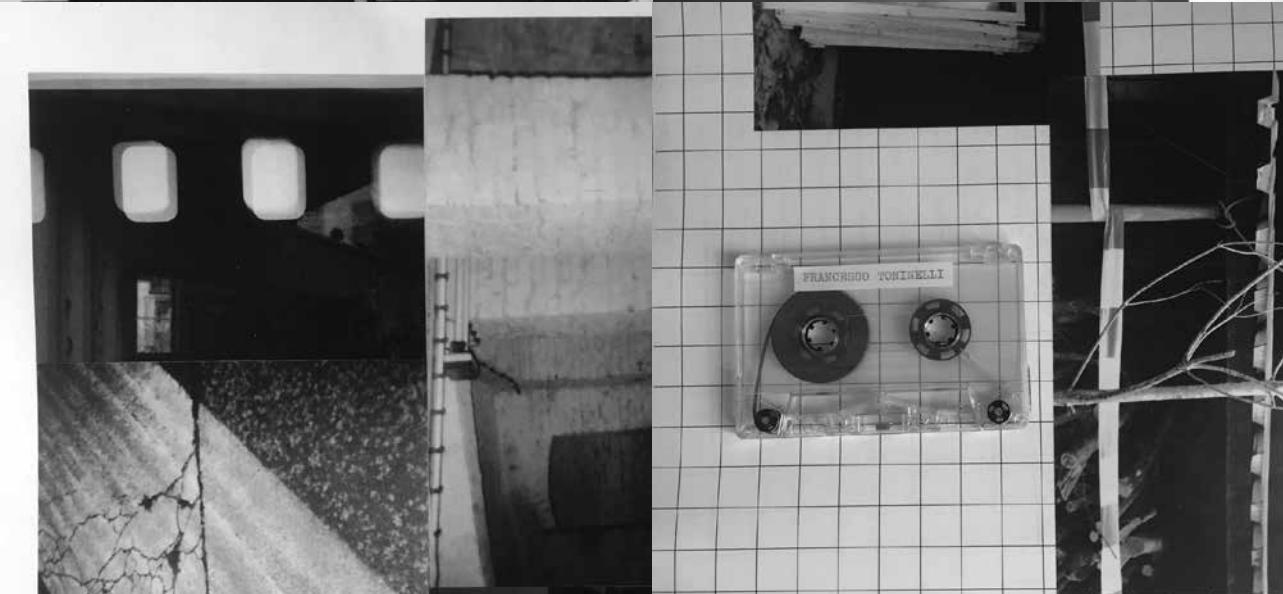
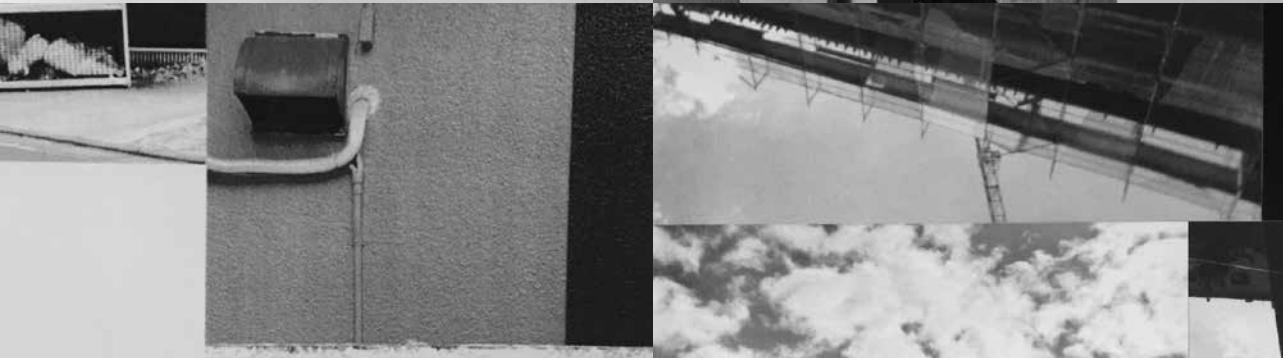
Haha, no.

**Are there artists with whom you work often, e.g. bruno duplant or anyone else?**

Yes, Bruno makes great works, he might be a Falt resident. I also worked with Leo Okagawa multiple times, he had his collaboration with Simon Whethem and the duo tape with Ayami Suzuki, both great, and his solo tape is great too. I mean, it is nice that people come back to Falt, offer new things and like to keep talking about projects, like Matt Atkins who releases solo work and collaborations via Falt or Thomas Liefhold, who is a very good friend of mine and who has released a number of Falt tapes over the years under different monikers.

**Besides the limited edition physical copies, how about bandcamp and digital sales, are you satisfied so far with that? Do you think that bandcamp is a useful tool if you want to run a net/tape label nowadays?**

Actually Bandcamp is my main operating system, the Falt OS haha, I don't know how to make websites and I don't want to learn really. Bandcamp is providing a nice service for me. I really like that you can download in your favourite format, like Flac or wav or high-res mp3, and I also like the interface, like when you go on the site and it looks quite good. It is a good tool and I am ok that we also pay for it, really. Good thing is you only pay when you sell stuff. The problem might just be PayPal, would be awesome to have another option there. But bandcamp? I have my completely unknown harsh noise project which is just hosted by bandcamp I could say, I don't pay because I don't sell anything, I think nobody listens to it online, but it still is online and I can show it to people and it is in the world and bandcamp gives me all this server time and hard drive space for my stupid project so I am ok with it, haha, please don't ask I won't tell you what it is. I find it also kind of hard feeding some kind of monopolist machine, because it turns out to be this way and I really see the problem with things like Bandcamp Friday, but for the moment it is ok for Falt. To be honest, I would not know how to reach out to people and tell them about the new tapes and the new available downloads if there were no bandcamp or twitter, haha. It is kind of stupid though. Makes me think about how when I was young we received a letter each month with the new releases from various punk labels haha, printed on paper and we passed it on to our friends like, wow have you seen this reissue...



superpang

# SUPERPANG

PHIL JULIAN: OBSTACLE 1.OST1 2.OST2 3.OST3 4.OST4 5.OST5 6.OST6 RECORDED 2019/2020 IN LONDON 15 15600MS

SUSANA SANTOS SILVA : FROM THE GROUND BIRDS ARE BORN 1. FROM THE GROUND BIRDS ARE BORN COMPOSED AND RECORDED BY SUSANA SANTOS SILVA JANUARY 2021 1108000MS

SUPERPANG SP50

SUPERPANG

SP36

CHRISTIAN ZANESI: DETOURNEMENT CHORAL 1.DETOURNEMENT CHORAL COMPOSED BY CHRISTIAN ZANESI FOR ARS MUSICA INTERNATIONAL CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FESTIVAL, BRUXELLES 2019 975600MS

COLIN WEBSTER: CASTLE 1.CASTLE COMPOSED BY COLIN WEBSTER RECORDED AT PECKHAM ROAD STUDIOS 2021 1 215000MS

SUPERPANG SP54

SUPERPANG

SP32

## superpang

I have to admit Superpang grabbed my attention thanks to the covers of its releases. And I noticed the label only when it issued a work by my friend Savvas Metaxas.

The release's sleeve brought to mind the early covers of the Austrian durian label, and I was also surprised to see that Joe Gilmore was the mind behind the label's artwork.

I did spend time exploring the label's releases, which can clock from a simple track lasting 5 minutes up to a more expanded release that lasts about two hours.

What really attracted me is the sound variety of the label. So under an enthusiasm for its sounds, I dropped a line to Chistian who runs it for the interview that flows below.

Enjoy!

[superpang.bandcamp.com](https://superpang.bandcamp.com)

**How did you come up with the idea of starting your own label? Did you like the idea of other labels and wanted to try starting that was yours? Was it from the very beginning the idea for a net-only label or did you want to start a label to release e.g. vinyl, tapes, but lack of time and money made you change your mind to a net-only one?**

Hi Nicholas, thanks for the invitation. I had been interested in releasing something by EVOL for a while before establishing SUPERPANG; Roc has been a friend for some time now, and one day I made up my mind to act on this interest, they agreed, and the rest is history. EVOL was supposed to be SP01 (the first release), but things didn't go exactly the way we planned. Regarding physical releases, the idea was initially for SUPERPANG to be a digital-only label, but plans (as they often do) have changed since we established the label. There will be physical media from SUPERPANG in 2022 (more info coming in the next few months).

**It was a pleasant surprise to see that Joe Gilmore designs the release covers and label's layout. I love his audio work too, 'On Quasi-Convergence And Quiet Spaces' is still a fave of the genre! How did this collaboration occur? To be also extremely honest, what really attracted me in Superpang's artwork, since the very beginning it somehow reminds me of the early covers of the Austrian 'Durian' label <https://www.discogs.com/label/10843-Durian-Records>**

Joe is a wonderful person, great all-around artist. Yeah, we first met through the Slack app, where we collaborated with many other artists to bring to life the «Pulsar.Scramble» compilations on \$ pwgen 20. The process of working with Joe was very natural, and we were in sync on the aesthetics for the SP series right from the start. Our collaboration will also continue in 2022; yeah, I believe Joe's unmissable style is absolutely critical to the label's success. I've even heard people have bought releases simply for the graphic continuity!

**The thing I enjoy with Superpang's releases so far is the variety of sound. Is not e.g. 'glitsch' or 'improvised', but offers a huge sound palette covering a wide area of creative musics. I believe it has to do with personal taste but curious to hear how you end up with a release or a release proposal (either made by you to an artist or by an artist to you)? And is this wonderful sound palette you have created something you had in mind since the beginning, or was it born slowly as the releases were evolving? I mean did you have in mind initially for it to be a solely electronics or electronica label but then added an improvised release you liked and the thing started expanding?**

If there is any unifying identity to the SUPERPANG releases, I think it is as simple as saying that they all reflect my musical tastes. When we started the label at the height of the pandemic it was not very easy for artists to have access to recording studios or prepare group sessions. With that, the first set of SUPERPANG releases were perhaps more focused on 'computer music' than other styles. However, as things have opened up, so has the scope of the label. Though it may seem selfish (or even self-centered), the fact that we aren't accepting demos stems from wanting to cultivate as varied an artist roster as possible. Once there might appear to be a 'sound' for the label, we endeavor away from it.

**What kind of problems do you usually face running a net-only label nowadays? Does it need more promotion than a physical one? Do you also fear sometimes that perhaps an artist not on purpose but accidentally can propose a less interesting or inferior release having in mind that it will not be on a physical format or not? I know it sounds stupid as a question, and of course can happen even to a proper label that releases vinyl, tapes, etc. to get the proposal of a less interesting recording for release.**

It is possible that artists may be a bit more 'casual' for online-only releases, but more often than not, I noticed it frees them up quite a bit. Given the costs and time associated with vinyl and other physical media, they are often more open to experimenting with styles or ideas they otherwise might feel they couldn't risk doing. There are quite a few disadvantages and problems around physical media these days, so I can't really complain about our digital series.

## EMBOÉS

**How about your releases, I mean do you have a certain release plan e.g. a release every three months or there's no concrete plan but when a release is ready to be uploaded you upload it in order to keep a 'standard' release sequence? And do you ask artists for releases or does it work vice versa?**

For SP01-100 we tried for one release a week. We didn't always succeed, especially at the beginning with a limited roster, but toward the later releases, we achieved that target. One of the advantages of digital is that we can work on a release right up to the second we want to put it out. To your last point, we asked artists, and we released things that were sent to us we enjoyed, a bit of both.

**Do you think the pandemic and the various lockdowns helped Superpang (ok holds for all of bandcamp) to expand its catalogue, and did you notice a bigger interest in your work (including downloads, etc)?**

Sure, yes. Though it's maybe worth noting that a big part of the label's intention was to help artists while they couldn't play gigs. It became a place for people to find new releases by artists they appreciate, discover new, like-minded artists, etc. I have no frame of reference regarding pre-pandemic sales, but I guess we will see what happens as restrictions start easing.

**How about Bandcamp? At the moment it is the label's main 'vehicle' where to run it, upload and promote your releases. Are you satisfied so far with the medium? Any fears around it? I mean that one sunny day a bigger organisation buys Bandcamp and changes it completely or even worse after a few years the team decides, as happened recently e.g. with Adobe's Flash, that it is a rather obsolete board and dismisses it? I know it sounds like a sci-fi scenario but seeing the recent coronavirus pandemic sometimes you can never know.**

I think the music is what matters most. We can put the work somewhere else if Bandcamp falters, so I don't worry about it. It's also worth mentioning that SUPERPANG releases are also available on boomkat.com as well ;) Thanks Nicolas!

KEN VENDERMARK & NATE WOOLEY DUO: THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE 1. BACK AND FORTH 1 2. TIME PIECE 1 3. BRASS TRIO WITH WIND SOLOIST 4. BACK AND FORTH 2 5. TIME PIECE 2 6. WIND TRIO WITH BRASS SOLOIST 1545000MS

SUPERPANG

SP85

SUPERPANG

# colin webster



## colin webster

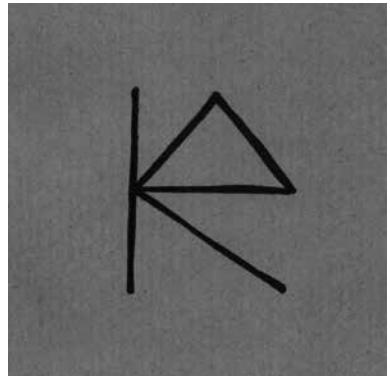
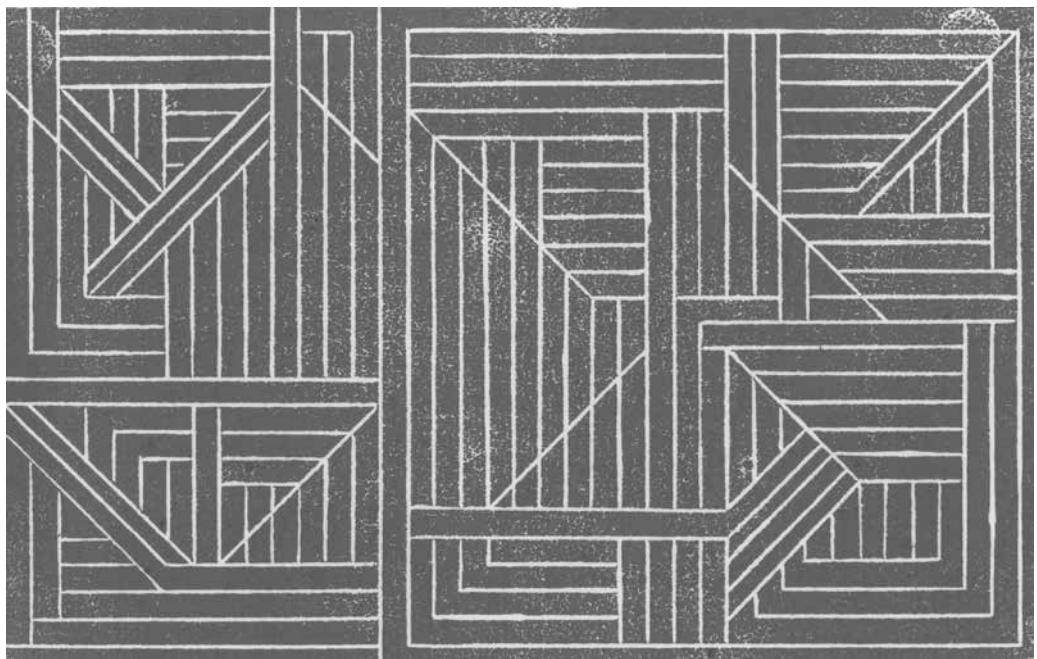
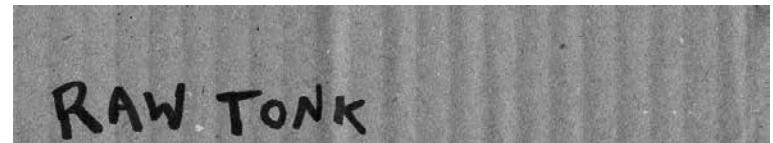
I came across Colin Webster and his Raw Tonk label a few years ago thanks to my friend Fotis Nikolakopoulos (his column of reviews in the Free Jazz blog comes highly recommended, check [freejazzblog.org/2010/01/fotis-nikolakopoulos.html](http://freejazzblog.org/2010/01/fotis-nikolakopoulos.html)) when during a meeting we often (before the pandemic) used to have, he mentioned Raw Tonk and the work of Colin Webster. I purchased a couple of releases at the time and enjoyed them a lot, but it wasn't until I discovered the flabbergasting 'Prime' LP of the Dead Neanderthals (featuring Colin on sax) on Gaffer records that I paid serious attention to his work.

'Prime' has been one of my favest records of the previous decade. A pure blast. As if a meteorite hit and demolished you. Almost three quarters of an hour of raining fire coming through your system's speakers, making your pants wetter and wetter and wetter. I totally recommend it!

Since that record, I started checking more of Raw Tonk's sound, his collaborations or participations, such as the great work of the Kodian Trio, and more.

The following interview was done via email a few months ago, after having spent a weekend of listening and/or downloading various Raw Tonks.

[Visit rawtonkrecords.bandcamp.com for more!](http://rawtonkrecords.bandcamp.com)



## How do you get through the pandemic?

It hasn't been easy for anyone, but I think I've been lucky that my family and friends have managed to stay healthy, and no serious tragedy or financial struggle. I think the whole thing has gone on so much longer than anyone predicted, but hopefully we are near the end now!

**I dare to ask as each time I check your work I get the impression of a real busy bee playing and improvising around with people -correct me if I am wrong though- therefore I asked as because of the pandemic and the lock-downs, nearly every live communication (be it attending a concert/gig, playing live, etc) was suddenly shelved.**

Yeah, exactly, I'm usually busy touring and playing shows and recording, so when the pandemic hit and we went into lockdown I just had to cancel everything. There was also the added frustration of rescheduling everything only to see it cancelled again. Only now, a year later, it looks like we can slowly return to booking shows again.

**However there was a period full of releases too? I am referring to the recent releases by Kodian Trio, the recent sndhls tape with your duo with Graham Dunning, or even 'vs amp', which I was listening to the other day and sounded completely different to previous solo material I had listened to (e.g. 'hiss'), just to mention a few.**

Most of the releases that came out during the pandemic were recorded some time before. For example I think vs Amp and the live Kodian Trio album were both recorded in February 2020. Now I have had a year with almost no recording sessions, so there will be a lot fewer releases in 2021 and 22.

**That makes me wanna ask about Raw Tonk and how it started as an idea. From the few releases I own and have downloaded (hence the amazing tees!!!!) it seems to me that at least as far as the label's artwork and design you pay a lot of attention to it. Also on the kind of paper you will use to house the release, or do you simply prefer custom paperboard packaging?**

The label started as a way to release the first Webster/Holub - The Claw - album as all the labels I approached couldn't do it as quickly as I wanted to. It's been DIY from the beginning, and I've been doing all the artwork apart from a few of the early releases. It's something I really love doing and I think getting better at, and it's nice to get some positive comments about the way the releases look.

**To be honest, each time I get a notification or a friend drops a line to inform me on a new Raw Tonk, I first check the cover. If I see the capital lettering I know that it is 99% dealing with a live documentation, if a design then probably a standard release, either yours or from other fellows. That always made me think of how do you**

**come up with the material you are about to issue? Mostly deals with recordings you have made and you liked, at least regarding your work, and recording friends have suggested for release and fit to Raw Tonk's aesthetics?**

It's a mixture really. Sometimes I know that I want to release one of my own projects on Raw Tonk, and sometimes I prefer it to be on another label. I get friends offering their releases, which is always great as they usually know the aesthetic. I get sent a lot of submissions as well, but it's quite rare I can accept those, and occasionally I will approach an artist to do something. Next year is 10 years of Raw Tonk, so I've asked some people who have been on the label over the years to do a release, so there should be some special things coming up.

**Is there a certain core of people you collaborate with usually, and sparsely with others depending on the situation (e.g. a meeting during a festival or a certain gig call...) or not? I ask as I'm seeing more works with Kodian Trio and Dirk Serries, Dead Neanderthals or Graham Dunning.**

I definitely like working with a core group of collaborators. I like to see projects grow and develop over the years. For example Mark Holub is one of the first people I ever played improvised music with over 15 years ago, when we were really right at the beginning. We live in different countries now so we don't play that often, but to still be touring and coming up with ideas for projects all

# colin webster

these years later is really great. I really like the idea of developing working groups, like Kodian Trio, or the duo with Graham Dunning, and seeing how they evolve over time. I also love playing with new people, and the BRAK concert series that I organise has been great for that as the line-up is always new.

**As I referred earlier to the Dead Neanderthals, I wanted to ask about your influences musical and not only music, curious on drawing as well (asking regarding Raw Tonk's artwork you see, as funnily enough there are covers that bring to mind a more 'linear' approach, then the 'live' ones with the capital lettering and so on...).**

**You might ask why I refer to DN in this question, well 'Prime' has been a record I have loved ever since I first listened to it, I remember reading the review on the freejazz blog (if i am not mistaken), purchasing it and by the time I received it and started listening to it, after almost 40 minutes I caught myself astounded feeling my pants wet with it. I don't feel this excitement THAT much with many records nowadays, that's why I use this collaboration as a reference regarding influences.**

This is interesting because I think now I listen to a lot less music that relates to the music that I play, and I don't feel like I need to be influenced by music that is in the same field that I work in. I think a lot of inspiration comes from simple concepts that I can

develop –like the 'vs Amp' idea of playing the baritone through guitar amps and seeing what can come from that. When I play with other people I think it's best to play as 'yourself' –the combination of thousands of influences, rather than play in the style of something specific.

**Are you mostly into baritone or doesn't matter that much, be it alto, baritone, but feel it is more important what fits to the sound you wanna make by the time you have a certain idea in mind?**

Alto and baritone are definitely what I play the most. They both suit certain situations better, so I usually decide in advance what to play. I still play tenor sometimes, but I feel like the way I play it only fits with a quite narrow range of situations.

**How about playing solo? Is it something you used to prefer when playing live, at least before the pandemic, or do you prefer to play solo in a more 'controlled' studio situation? Or you are looking for it as improvisation, mostly for the live feeling?**

I find playing solo a real challenge, that's why I only do it every couple of years, and very rarely play solo live. For me it definitely works best in a controlled situation like a studio, with some kind of outcome that you can already hear in your head. The 'vs Amp' album has had a really good reaction though, so I will make an effort to play live with this set-up as soon as I can.

**Guess I have the same question, if you prefer mostly playing live with projects or is it balanced between live sets and studio recordings regarding releases? I know that it is usually difficult to achieve a balance either way.**

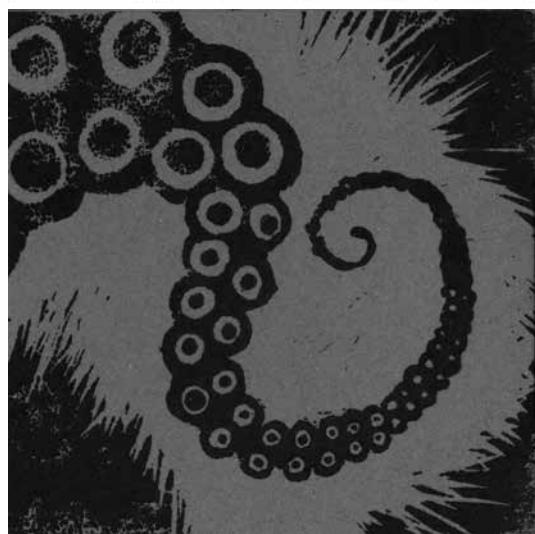
The way I feel now, I definitely prefer live. After over a year without hardly playing any shows, there is a strong feeling to get back to it. For releases usually I prefer the studio situation. It's just so much better to have the control over the sound of the recording. Live records are great also, but that relies a lot on luck – if it's a good night, if the mics are set up correctly, and everything else like that.

**Besides music and Raw Tonk, is there a standard job you have to do to earn a living or at least so far you manage to survive through it? Any problems you face with your projects and ideas?**

I work as a saxophone teacher here in London. It fits in well with life as a musician, and most of the time it's a really fun and challenging job.



© Codicic Craps





## alice kemp

One of the most creative developments to have happened to me in the last 15 years from the “staying up to date with all things experimental” perspective, is my meetings with Nicolas Malevitsis. These usually take place at some park bench alongside several beers, stories, ideas, and a constant need for discussing future plans - some of which come true and some of which don’t. It was at one such meeting back in early 2014, when, out of the usual bagful of records we like to exchange, I grabbed a plain black digipack with a red sticker on the cover. “I brought you this because I know you will go crazy about it”, said Nicolas. It was the ‘Decay And Persistence’ cdr on Fragment Factory, a label we both admire. It was also my first introduction to the work of UK sound artist Alice Kemp. Over the next few years, whenever I saw Kemp’s name I went after it, be it a new youtube video of a performance or some new visual work of hers, like the recent handmade album cover she did for Will Guthrie & Rudolf Eb.er, or her work on amazing labels such as Harbinger Sound, Tochnit Aleph and Dead Mind Records. But it was mainly listening to her, so far, sole full-length LP, ‘Fill My Body With Flowers And Rice’ (Erratum / Fragment Factory), when I was finally convinced that Alice Kemp was a case of a truly unique artist - and also one of my very favourite ones. Due to my great excitement about her latest release on Coherent States, ‘To All My Hideous Children’, I suggested to Alice that we conduct this interview, which could not have been published anywhere else other than Nicolas’ Emvoes zine.

Manolis Pappas | Coherent States

# alice kemp

Let's start from the beginning. Several tracks by Defeatist, Uniform and Ringo Christ, projects in which you participated, were included in various albums by Appliance Japan, a short-lived label which was active back in the mid-00's. I would love to know more about the background of it all.

I'll try.

Defeatist hatched from Mik Shepherd with Ju Cope, myself, and I think Col Bradley. We made some abrupt recordings in Sheffield in the early-mid 90s. I still enjoy those recordings in my mind, mainly because of Mik's vocal stylings.

At the turn of the century, I was living on Dartmoor. Mik had emigrated to Japan and was incubating the Appliance Japan label, and Col invited me to join Dual for some live gigs. At one of these gigs (at the Red Rose in London) I met Wajid Yaseen from 2nd Gen. Over the next while I contributed some guitar and vocal to 2nd Gen, and after some experiments, Wajid and I began Uniform. I mostly joined in for the live performances.

In 2003 I travelled to Japan and with Mik's organisation and support, I toured as Germseed. It was a beautiful time and I stayed in Japan for 3 months. I returned in 2004 for another 2 months, and one night Mik and I gigged an aural mess as Defeatist in a club in Kobe.

Back in Devon in the UK, I fell across a gaggle of 'international shiftless perverts'. There was a lot of shouting and stupid turntablism mixed up with toy stuff, broken things and ugly volume. We called this Ringo Christ. Our voice-human (Ric Royer) would compile a set-list of imaginary titles and we would meet in a blackout room and make the noise (the opposite to making pieces and then titling them). It was kind of an obnoxious mess. That's no reason to stop, but stop we did when Royer returned to the USA, he was the main energy.

24

In late summer of 2005 I was directly involved in a road traffic accident near my home in Devon, which wasn't released as a recording, but it halted everything apart from my alcohol intake. The halted things included an upcoming tour in Japan with an augmented Defeatist. Mik released a couple of things as Defeatist, I'm not sure I was on those releases but I think I was credited anyway. They toured without me, but I returned the following year and we toured in yet another line up plus guests. Somewhere in all of this, Mik was releasing these elegant 'various artists' LP editions on his label, and he approached me for sonic contributions.

That is all very interesting and many of my queries are now answered - the things that the internet won't tell you about. So 'Protocol', the second and final album by Uniform, was released right after that freeze? From the very little information I can dig online, I understand that you provided some music and text parts for that one. Alan Vega & Lydia Lunch also participated in some tracks. Did it feel strange that 'Protocol' was released on a major label like Planet Mu?



I contributed bowed acoustic guitar, self-cut-up vocal for 'Are Faces Objects', and a piece of text spoken by Franko on 'No One Saw The Difference'. Maybe some other sound too, maybe some title choices.

'Protocol' is a dense phenomena. The way we worked, as Uniform, we would have long phone calls, endlessly fracturing concepts, ideas about ideas about ideas, and so forth. Not necessarily conversations about sound, but all kinds of things. Wajid would employ our interactions as part of the fuel which he sculpted into sound. I wasn't involved in any other aspects of the release, the label communications and so on, and I wasn't familiar with Planet Mu as a label.



**The first release under your own name was the 'Decay And Persistence' cdr (Fragment Factory, 2013), but this wasn't the first time that Alice Kemp was introduced to the world. That was when you presented your in depth study on Runzelstirn & Gurgelstöck in the first (and sadly last) issue of 'As Loud As Possible' magazine back in late 2010. So, how did you meet Rudolf Eb.er and what parts of the Schimpfluch philosophy made you become an affiliate & collaborator?**

I don't exactly recall meeting Eb.er. It would have been some time after my first R&G experience in Osaka in 2003, which was powerful and direct, manifesting in an unambiguously intense physical reaction during the performance. I've told a lot of people about that, that the thing happened. But thinking on it now - although it happened in public, it was an incredibly personal incident, a peculiar involuntary bodily shaking - mystifying, embarrassing, uncontrollable, and with depth. I hadn't known what to expect of R&G, which made it all the more a 'perfect' reaction. Actually I think our work is quite different. There may be more and different to come, let's see...

I remember a specific line from your description of the Osaka incident; although you had no prior experience of Eb.er's work, your feeling was that the action was going to end up in a Nitsch-esque blood orgy. But this never happened. And that is exactly what I get from Eb.er myself, and what I understand to be a deep essence of his art, without of course having the luck of having attended any of his performances; An anxious anticipation of impending violence, which usually doesn't happen in a physical way, but the anticipation becomes a form of psychological violence itself. Wouldn't you say that this specific feeling is present in your art as well, either performatively or compositionally? I felt the very same shiver the first time I played your 'Impregnator Of The Death Mouth' 7" (Harbinger Sound, 2015) for example.

A beautiful and complex tensile arena can open up when an extended moment of unknown quality is given focus and space to breathe and unfurl. Also, without particular focus on "how does it end", as if the ending or resolution is the most important part. It is not. Not in my work, anyway. I could frame it as a space to relax into uncertainty - my own, and yours, and that which lies between us.

**On your website we read that as an artist you explore an idiosyncratic praxis involving experimental music, audio composition, public/private performance, installation, drawing, writing, and object making. Your debut LP, 'Fill My Body With Flowers And Rice' (Fragment Factory / Erratum, 2016), feels like a space where most of the above overlap each other in a very sensitive way. Would you like to share some information about the recordings and the ideas behind them?**

In those times I visited the woods almost every day with my Zoom H4N and made recordings. I was dreaming intensely through the night, and in the day I was wandering, getting lost, meditating, masturbating, meeting animals and entities, getting into trouble, falling, climbing, and dissolving into the woods. I remember trying to capture that, or at least describe those spontaneous experiences which were ultimately not directly recordable (except in the meshing of my senses). The LP contains sections of those recordings, and recordings made at home using an upright piano, a mirror, voice, and other collected sound. I sent some sound to Rudolf, and he responded with two astonishing pieces which I was honoured to include, as they described experiences that I hadn't told him about.

# alice kemp

**I guess this is why the record evokes such a strong visceral feeling. I'll certainly be listening to the music in a different way from now on. I was also wondering if there is a story behind the title, 'Fill My Body With Flowers And Rice'.**

It's a residue of a memory. I knew a girl many years ago at school, she was explaining a scene from a story to me - it may have been from a story she wrote or a story she had enjoyed, or it may have been something from Poe - and she was describing a part where a human corpse is stuffed with rice and flowers and presented on a table in some way. And these words conjure something for me, equal parts perverse-horror-image, graceful-death-rite, feast-preparation-with-much-aliveness, and something else. The first copy I received from the plant, I buried in the woods with my good friend and colleague Tony Whitehead. I mean to say - we buried the LP, not that I buried Tony with the record. I've seen him recently and he's fine.

**I have watched some of your performances (unfortunately only on youtube for the time being) and I got the feeling that both imagery and sound carry the same importance and harmoniously shape the action. Have you ever thought of trying performances with less sound or, respectively, less performative live music shows?**

There's very little of my performance work online, partly because I haven't encouraged video documentation, and partly because most of the work won't just translate into video - the subtlety is not created for that medium. Often the live work requires 'real time' and proximity in order to bear fruit. It lives somewhere towards a species of theatre. I've certainly made performances with little-to-no sound involved. I've tried to avoid making traditional/typical set-up type shows, in part because I've wanted to avoid laptops and back projections (i.e eyes on screens) - I wanted to use that gift of a live space for other experiments and creations. However, I'd like to remain open to possibility, so... I don't know how my live space will evolve.

26

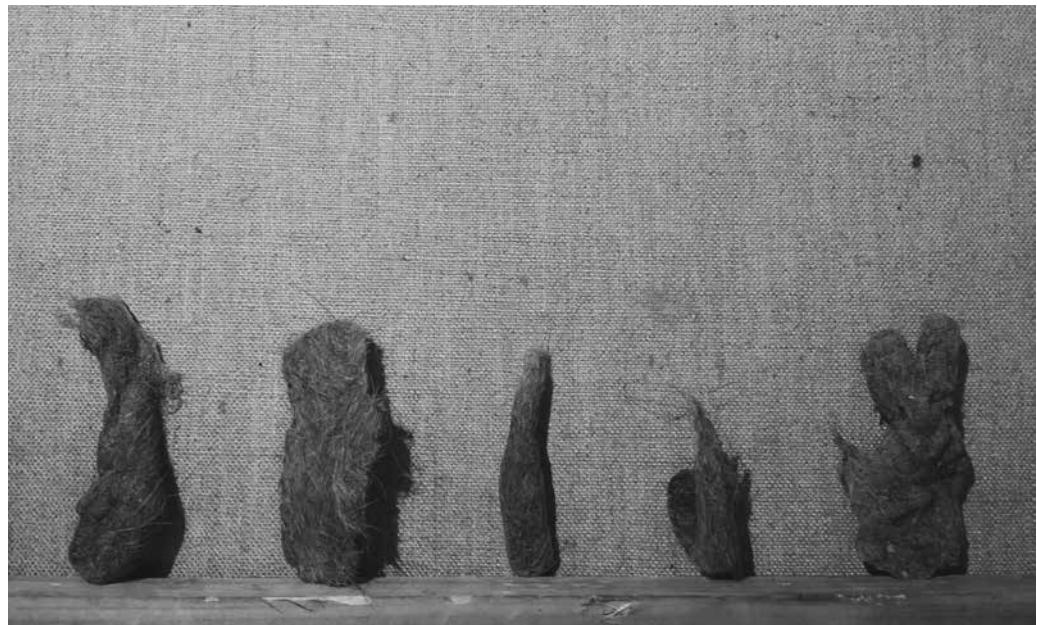
**Speaking about species of theatre, apart from the real-time live actions, words are equally important. I was wondering if we are going to see more pamphlets including your poetry work, like 'A Poke In The Eye' & 'Mystery Plays'. They were both great!**

Thank you Manolis. Wrathful Flower Press is alive. The next 2 pamphlets are in progress, one features work by Olchar E. Lindsann (of mOnacle-Lash Anti-Press). I intend to get that one out this year.



**Do you ever imagine the listeners as they discover your work? Are there any particular reactions you would like to provoke?**

Consciously, I prefer not to imagine listeners. I try to remain within the state that I'm in when making, especially if I'm experiencing strong visual sensations/perceptions such as rooms or hallways or such. I try to keep the work as audience-free as I can. Not for anti-audience reasons, but to give the work the space it needs to become whatever it is, without extra pressures. At least, that's what I intend. Sometimes people write to me expressing their personal experiences of my work, and I enjoy that connection.



**You live and work near Dartmoor, an area deeply connected to nature and traditional folklore. Did you choose to live there because it affects the way you make art? Do you believe that getting vibes from a more urban environment would lead to a different kind of art?**

I've lived here for a long time. It feels like centuries. It's mainly circumstantial... However, I experience strong connection to the landscape here. But I would also like to make work in a city. I would like to spend a few months in a city and make.. a something.

**Burying records in the ground, screaming like a fox in the woods, woodcrafting strange dolls - actions that imply the existence of a ritual behind them. What do all these mean to you?**

This is not something I can answer comfortably and easily, except maybe to say that these are examples of how I live and communicate.

**I would very much like to know some details about your new cassette album, 'To All My Hideous Children'.**

The title comes partly from a visit to a medical museum in Berlin, and partly from the many dreams I've had of dead or frightening babies. I don't tend to have those dreams any more, but as a young woman, I had them often. The music, it's not directly married to those things. But maybe it touches them at points. I'm not sure how to approach speaking about the music. Like much music, it's zone creation.

**Last words are yours, if any.**

Famous last words?



I first came across the story of Anthony Milton's 'San Miguel del Bala' record on his Pseudoarcana label back in 2012, when the now defunct Field Reporter mag published it in three parts. It was Chris Whitehead, who not only did a review of Anthony's eponymous digital release, but also had a brief introduction to his travels in the area of San Miguel del Bala, the Bolivian rainforest and the health problem that happened to him on the last day of his trip when, due to a bite from a tropical sand fly, he was infected and upon return diagnosed with leishmaniasis.

For a long time I had wanted to have the story translated into Greek and feature it on an issue of the fanzine. A task that turned out to be problematic as each time I was expecting the translation from a friend who wanted to do it, some problem would always occur and the idea would be shelved.

This was until I started working on this issue and I emailed Anthony asking if I could simply reproduce it.

So here it is, a short travelogue around the San Miguel del Bala project, which can be found here:

<https://antonymilton.bandcamp.com/album/san-miguel-del-bala>

## Story of the San Miguel del Bala record

Aquarius Records have very kindly sent out a heads up about this release directing people to this blog for the story of how it all came about. As this particular blog was written a few months ago I am re-posting an edited version here at the top of the blog list so that it's easy to find.

(And for those who have been following the blog I can now confirm that I do indeed have Leishmaniasis, a tropical disease that I picked up whilst making this very record. Haha- little did I know what was coming! It's taken a month since getting back to NZ to finally secure a diagnosis but now we can start treatment so that is good news! For the last month I have been unable to walk but hopefully I will be back on my feet and playing again very soon).

Anyway, here's the story of the record:

So much for plans... Especially in this part of the world! I was writing at the end of that last blog post about my intention to finish off and release my public transport album from the wonderful frenetic city of La Paz whilst my partner Sara was off on a multi day trek with some Swiss friends.. But the 'Collectivo' album will have to wait until I get home now.

Everything changed due to a bout of illnesses. One of our Swiss friends actually got so ill that he wound up in hospital for a few days and this put something of a dampener on their trekking plans. We waited a few days whilst decisions were being made as to whether or not to proceed and during this time my guts turned to liquid as well.

Ultimately we came to conclude that it was perhaps at least partly the frigid airless nature of the Altiplano that was largely to blame for our various infirmities. A decision was taken to bail for the lowlands.

Rurrenabaque is a small town in the Bolivian selva (Amazon jungle) that gained a certain notoriety when a group of Israeli adventurers came unstuck there. Several of them died and the bestseller 'Heart of the Amazon' was written by one of the survivors. Somewhat perversely this resulted in the place

becoming a major tourist attraction, especially for other Israeli tourists seeking perhaps to prove their survival skills superior to that of their countrymen. Many tour agencies were set up to take groups out into the jungle. A national park -Madidi- was formed and the numbers increased until today when 'Rurre' is one of Bolivia's top tourist attractions

To be honest initially we had planned to skip the place. It was if anything overhyped and we had read many negative reports about the tours based from here. Amongst the most notorious were rumours that animals are frequently kept in cages close to tracks so that guides can miraculously spot and catch, say, an anaconda to present to their clients. But at the same time we were both keen after the Iquitos river trip in Peru to have another jungle experience and maybe Rurre was as good as anywhere?

Sara did some online research and posted a query on a couple of forums asking if anyone could recommend a good tour company that didn't capture or mistreat animals. Within hours she had several responses and at least 2 of these were recommending a company called San Miguel del Bala, a Conservation International affiliated business owned and run as a community trust in an attempt to turn to tourism as an income stream now that no logging was allowed in the Madidi National Park. What's more it turned out that it was possible to stay longer term as a volunteer. One still had to pay to do this- around NZ\$14 per day- but this was still significantly cheaper than the US\$70 it cost to visit as a guest. I read something on the website about them being particularly interested in special projects. Bingo! I wrote them about the possibility of making a CD documenting the sound environment, natural and musical, at and around the lodge and the National Park. I had a positive reply within hours and we started making our plans to get down there.

Rurre is 18 hours by bus from La Paz. A long long way and the road is notoriously dangerous and muddy- there are frequent reports of the trip taking 30 hours or more. The alternative was an expensive 20 minute flight. Sara and I decided to take the bus -I was actually pretty excited about the trip- the great thing about goat tracks around vertical drops is that they are typically attended by great views- had to be an adventure.

Last day in La Paz was spent scouring the pirate software stalls for music programs, editing and multitrack software. Needless to say nearly every program you could imagine was available for next to nothing. Then it was off to the chemist to stock up on antibiotics in case of tropical bugs, and valium to knock ourselves out for the overnight sections of the upcoming bus trials.

The bus itself departed at least an hour and a half later than its schedule (in part because some family was moving house and all their lounge furniture and fridge freezers etc somehow had to be slotted into the hold under the bus) from a part of La Paz we had never visited before. It was a fascinating city like that, there are tight narrow valleys disappearing into the mountain sides everywhere with whole substantial suburbs effectively hidden away from view. I was pretty sad to leave knowing that this would be our last visit for this journey at least. It seemed a very livable city and I had many fantasies of what I could do there living in an apartment. All those markets full to brimming with useful tools and materials. If it weren't for the notoriously ineffective, and perhaps even downright corrupt, postal service it would be a great place from which to run a record label.

We seem to have had pretty crap luck when it comes to windows on buses. For some reason the locals seem to have an aversion to fresh air on public transport and prefer to ride their journeys out in a hot humid fetid funk. Somehow Sara and I always seem to wind up with seats between windows with the seats in front or behind having control over ventilation. We usually manage to sneakily open a neighbour's window a crack or more but this is always discovered within minutes and the offending breeze cut off. So it was for at least the 1st few hours of this journey. We set off over a high snowy mountain pass before dropping down down down past exquisite scenery- massive craggy mountain faces awash with spectacular waterfalls- 2 hours or so down and into the beginnings of the tropics and the jungle. The heat and general mugginess increased so that some windows were opened, if only a cm or so. For all the austere breathless beauty of the highlands there's something about these tropical lowlands that I prefer. Things are instantly more laid back. It's hard to rush in this kind of heat. Everyone

gets around in shorts, singlets and jandals. No suits down here. The bus rattled along for hours through lush jungle kicking up and occasionally being subsumed into enormous clouds of dust from vehicles coming the other way.

Whenever we met a truck or bus like this, a standoff would occur. This is a rigidly one way track, frequently cut into the side of sheer clay cliffs, and it would have to be decided which vehicle would reverse to the previous passing bay. A hair-raising experience with the bus' carriage frequently overhanging the edge. (And this only got worse at night in the dark when the driver's assistant would get off and attempt to guide us backward by feeble torchlight). We passed tiny villages in the bush, the buildings of thatched palm fronds and the locals generally to be spotted lounging in hammocks or swimming in the creeks. A dinner of bbq'd steak and beer in a small town. Then the lights off, we took our valium tablets and zoned out gaga to the Beatles' White Album, Brian Eno and old Pink Floyd bootlegs. (All classic rock -haha- but perfect given the scenario).

Getting bogged in mud is one of the hazards of this trip and I awoke in the dark to find that all the noise and action was in attempt to free us from a small quagmire. Turned out that it was 5.30am and that we were on the very outskirts of Rurrenabaque. The drugs had worked! Half an hour later, in the rosy dawn, we retrieved our dusty packs from the hold and gave ourselves entirely to a tout who was offering a room in a riverside hotel for an ok price. He offered to drive us down on the back of his 125cc motorbike (not many cars here - most of the taxis are motorbikes!) but I had no idea how this was even remotely feasible with all our bags so we walked behind him as he putted along down to the river and our home for the night. A nice place, free bananas, parrots in the trees, hammocks on the shady deck, and the big brown Rio Beni rolling sluggishly passed. We took to our room and promptly fell fast asleep until early afternoon.

Town was a collection of dirt and cement roads lined with cheap chicken restaurants (wooden benches and plastic flowers), a phenomenal array of 2nd hand clothing stalls, and the typical general stores and electro gadget shops. There was one street dominated by over-priced tourist



restaurants and bars with signs in bad English, and I assume equally bad Hebrew. There were many tour agencies, but with the season winding down some only a handful of actual tourists. We found the offices of San Miguel del Bala and introduced ourselves to Eric, the guy with whom we had been corresponding.

Eric is something of an enigma, I got to know him as well as I could over a few weeks but I was never sure if I really knew him at all. He was born in a remote village/mission several hours further into the jungle from Rurre. Recognizing his intelligence at 6 years old the German priests running the mission sent him to a German school in La Paz. He spent the next 10 years here, only returning home during school holidays. Now 32 he speaks 5 languages and has several degrees in biology and business studies from universities in Brazil and Argentina. He claims to have held prestigious jobs all over Bolivia setting up environmentally aware tourism infrastructures. It was Eric's father who found and saved the life of Yossi Brain, the Israeli who wrote the book that turned Rurrenabaque into a tourist

location. Together they set up the 1st eco lodge in the area. He has a wife and a son 3 years old. But besides all this there was something lost and sad about him. Possibly just the simple angst of a talented and ambitious man in a country and culture where such things are frequently disregarded.

So we went over the volunteer agreements with Eric, signing a 7 day contract (the minimum - a trial period). I was left somewhat unsure that they knew what the fuck I was on about with my project, but they seemed keen to encourage me all the same. The deal was that we would work a minimum of 4 hours a day in return for the reduced-rate food and accommodation at the lodge. We signed an acknowledgement that San Miguel was in no way responsible for injuries occurring as a result of falls nor snake or scorpion bite. He told us to be back at the office at 8am the next morning so that we could catch the boat up river.

Loading our gear on board I was glad of my dry bag (a truly waterproof rubber bag containing my zoom recorder and other electronics). The boat

was not much more than a dug out log with an outboard motor at the back. Pretty fucking cool but with definite potential for an unexpected swim. We had thought Eric was going to join us but as we boarded he waved goodbye and the boat set off against the current. Operating like a taxi it called in, picked up and dropped off people as we went. 45 minutes on a surging hot chocolate coloured tumult with stunning rocky cliffs and green jungle lining the banks. At one point we stopped to watch a large weasel-like creature swimming across toward the other bank. It was nearly there when we came along but got so freaked out by the boat that the poor bugger turned around and swam back toward the bank it had set out from.

We arrived and it was straight into the start of our 4 hours work unloading the various food supplies we had brought up river and carrying them up to the lodge. It was really bloody hot, incredibly humid, but we were told that even the locals were a bit freaked out by the heat and that it wasn't like this most of the time. The lodge itself was a beautiful place - as one would expect! There were 2 large buildings down by the river, a dining hall and kitchen and a big mosquito meshed common house containing hammocks, a small library and a tiny museum. The main accommodation area -7 self contained cabins- was an arduous climb up a stairway up the hill. We got to know this climb intimately over the next few weeks carrying guests' luggage up to the cabins and undertaking our morning cleaning details.

The volunteers were housed in a small hut near the kitchen along with the other local workers. This was perfectly adequate, ok beds and good mozzie nets. At night a torch was essential to get up to the cabin, no lights once the generator was shut off and the rough bush track prone to invasion by snakes, scorpions, and tarantulas. (Actually tarantulas were the most common of the exotic creatures we encountered. Seemed to be everywhere). The most common actual hazard was a species of small wasp with a violent disposition. It would attack on sight, administering small but painful stings without any provocation whatsoever. I estimate I got at least 3 such stings every day I was there.

32

I was keen to get on with my project and so set about recording bird and insect sounds around the lodge. The insect sounds in particular were truly amazing. Very metallic, very loud and so like electronic sounds it was difficult to believe that they were natural. Julio, the manager at the lodge, seemed a little perplexed by my forays with microphone in hand and it took me maybe longer than it should have to realise that there had been no communication from the office about what I had come to do at all. I kept asking when the laptop I had been promised would arrive and he would just smile and shrug. If he had said "what laptop?" I may have clicked earlier that he was in the dark about the whole thing.

Anyway upshot was that for the first few days I didn't really get much work done on my project at all but rather helped with the general volunteer work. Needless to say the hours tended to exceed the agreed amount but as there wasn't much else to do I didn't really mind. Pretty much every morning we were there we would start out by cleaning around the cabins up on the hill. This meant going up there with a rake and a broom for 2 hours or more of sweeping up leaves. A pretty surreal scenario in the jungle! Needless to say this work was never completed because the place was subject to a constant rain, a veritable storm of falling leaves. Besides the blisters I got a perverse pleasure from this work however. I could wander off up some trail and work my way back listening to the forest. It was a meditative time. Besides this we did jobs like building stairways and new paths.

The lodge is a 15 minute walk upstream from the village/community of San Miguel del Bala itself. We had several excursions down here during our time off, a hair raising experience for me being a snake phobe walking through long grass. It was very interesting to visit because they still have no electricity (besides some solar powered lights) and people were still living much as they have for 100s of years. I got some great recordings down there, especially one day when they were using a huge wooden sugarcane press to extract sugar juice, a whole team of people driving it. Most of the people here survive by subsistence farming. Before the Lodge, and the National Park, the major external income came from logging. There were many banana and cacao groves (cocoa pod trees), and areas were being cleared for rice paddies.

# ΕΜΒΟΕΣ

On the 3rd or 4th day Eric showed up bringing with him the laptop and having a sit down meeting with me and Julio. Eric suggested that maybe he could organise a trip upriver to the Madidi National Park proper so that I could record some monkeys and other more exotic animals. Sounded great, I said. He asked Julio to help me as he could, including running the generator, a horrible noisy little petrol affair, whenever I needed to recharge the laptop battery. Shithot! I was in business. Straight away I set up in the common house and loaded on some software and started editing the insect recordings I'd gotten. Eric said he would be back "the day after tomorrow", or possibly the day after that and we could head up the river.

I think it was 4 days later that he showed up midmorning. (Everything happened at a tropical pace here... Manana manana manana..) He arrived and said "So, we can leave in 30 minutes?". OK! That's a change of pace! Better hurry. Sara and I rushed up to get a day pack together. Also coming with us was a new Irish volunteer named Peter who had shown up a day or two earlier. A great young guy, his appearance on the scene represented a huge coincidence in that he was a biologist with a particular interest in bio-acoustics.

Never before had the locals heard of these freakish westerners who wanted to record animal sounds and now they had 2 of them at once. If it wasn't for the fact that Peter's digital recorder had broken I think I may have surrendered the documentary part of my project to him entirely. As it was we helped each other out and had great discussions about music etc as we were both pretty much into the same sounds. Traded Sublime Frequency mp3s etc.

Down to the boat with our gear and Eric says: "That's all you need for 3 days?" 3 days!!! I thought we were going for the afternoon... More panic as we rushed to try and get multi overnight kit together.

And so started an utterly unexpected adventure wherein we got what was essentially a free guided trip into the deep Amazon Jungle. We clambered aboard yet another log with a motor, this one even more basic than the 1st one we went on, the motor sounded like a tractor and pushed us upstream at a snail's pace. Really this was an astounding

situation to find myself in. Actually I felt a little like a fraud. I'm a guy who likes mixing together weird noises but here I was with an indigenous tribal community funding me to go for 3 days on a serious documentary expedition, with nothing more than a Zoom H4. Pretty damn lucky really.

The scenery was amazing, the river at times utterly terrifying. With us onboard were Eric and 2 other local men, one of the lodge's main guides, and the boat driver. At one point we pulled over to shore where they jumped off and cut some long lengths of bamboo. I had no idea what these were for until we reached the rapids and they were put to use to try and stabilise the boat as we struggled upstream, coming close to capsizing more times than I care to remember. At one stage there was a cacophony of parrot squalls and Eric pointed out a clay cliff full of holes inhabited by raucous Toucans. I was too worried that we were likely about to have an accidental swim to get my recorder out of its dry bag.

We pulled into shore maybe 4 hours upstream and carried our gear up the beach. We were at a semi-permanent camp used by San Miguel del Bala for jungle tours. Tents were set up and a basic camp kitchen put in order. Then we went fishing. The rivers here in the Amazon absolutely teem with fish of all sorts, piranhas, even giant piranhas, included. There are huge fish here, fish heavier than can easily be lifted and this is one of the main foodstuffs in the region. Fish was to be our staple food, along with plantain and yucca, during our time in the bush.

**Fishing technique number 1:**  
Collect enormous grubs from grass by river bank.  
Use grubs to catch abundant small sprats (approx time to catch small fish with grub = 5 seconds)  
Use sprats as bait to catch bigger fish on handline.  
This didn't work so well for us... It was drizzling when we tried and actually pretty cold and apparently fish don't feed during cold spells...

**Fishing technique number 2:**  
Use drift net - hold one end and let the other be taken out by current.  
Walk along the shore following your drift net for approximately 5 minutes.  
Wade out and gather the net in.  
This was REMARKABLY successful! On the first

try we caught 4 huge fish, much bigger than any trout I've seen. We smoked these over the fire and besides being full of tiny bones they were delicious

I had bought a bottle of scotch with Peter and we shared this around the campfire before heading to our tent. It was cold and I was glad of the sleeping bags (something I couldn't imagine using on other warmer nights), but at least the cold kept the mosquitos at bay.

Next morning we were up and off bright and early in a continuing light drizzle, fueled by frequent stops to add more coca leaves to the wad in one's mouth. (The locals are very addicted to chewing coca and we were enthusiastic amateurs). I carried my recorder under my coat. We walked a big loop through the bush for several hours stopping to record whenever we came across anything of interest.

Some of the bird sounds -the Horned Screamer for eg- were amazing, but needless to say it was the animals we wanted to see and hear. On that first loop we heard and saw some Brown Capuchin Monkeys. They made it onto the final album but are not so exciting sonically as some of the other monkeys.

After a quick lunch of smoked fish back at camp we got on our motorised log and headed on upstream for an hour or so. Saw a crocodile on the river bank - I would be more cautious swimming in the river after that! Pulled into a lagoon off the river proper and did another long hike through the bush. Not that we covered much ground really, but we were moving much as hunters do, with deliberate quiet stealth like zen walking, one conscious step after another. First animal encounter of the afternoon was a large group of wild pigs. These were terrifying! Huge black beasts that seemed determined to stand their ground and made an enormous racket clacking their tusks at us. CLACK CLACK CLACK! Then they would all bolt howling through the undergrowth smashing small trees and whatever was in their path. Got some great recordings.

An hour or so later we came across a group of Spider Monkeys.

Was starting to feel pretty knackered by the time we turned around and headed back to the boat. Had something like 75 recordings already but a problem was on the horizon. Not having been aware that we would be out here for so long I hadn't organised getting any more batteries for my recorder. One of the guests at the lodge had kindly donated me what AAs they had with them but unfortunately these turned out to be rubbish. Another eg of counterfeit goods, they claimed to be sony alkaloid batteries but when I tried them I found that simply even booting up the recorder (turning it on) used nearly a third of their charge. Bugger! So I had to be pretty conservative with the recorder from then on.

The boat fairly flew back down stream to camp. A spot of fishing on the way. Dinner and chat around the fire.

Eric and the other local guys headed off for some night fishing. With my batteries dying we would head back down to the lodge tomorrow and they wanted fish to take to their families. I decided to head off to try and record some frogs, something I considered very brave given my terror of snakes, creatures more active at night and especially fond of the swampy watery areas frequented by amphibians... I walked at a snail's pace, my torch studying every inch of ground for a goodly while before I took the next step. I got what I considered some good recordings and crept back to camp just as cautiously (in fact in later review with Eric I discovered that what I had was a collection of recordings of remarkably exotic sounding crickets...)

The next morning I awoke in the pre-dawn to a distant roaring. I leapt up with the recorder just as Eric called out to me to get ready. Howler Monkeys! It was the most amazing sound, a deep throaty call and response between two groups at separate ends of the valley. There was a wonderfully weird stereophonic ambience at this distance but the sound was too quiet to get a good read and so I set off running through the jungle- for 2 or 3 km (! the longest I've run in years...) with the guide Ronaldo (Eric laughing stayed in bed).

And so it was that I got perhaps the most dramatic recording of the trip, nearly asphyxiating in my desire to not pant breathlessly all over the recording, when we got right up to the very tree inhabited

# EMBOÉS

by one of the howlers in time to record a good 5 minutes or so of throaty roaring before it finished up for the day and curled up to go to sleep. Duty done for the day, territory confirmed. Sounded for all the world like death metal vocals.

Next day we truck camp, loaded the boat and another hairy trip back down the river. A very close call at one rapid with even the locals suddenly in panic mode fighting the river with their poles to keep us off a rock rushing up that would have flipped us easy as a leaf. The trip down with the current was a fast one, the jungle cliffs and rapids speeding past, and we were back at the lodge by midday. Not exactly anticlimactic but a shock to be back there so soon. The sun came out for the first time since we'd left just as we arrived home.

Despite the instructions to the lodge people that I was there to work on a special project it was evident that this wasn't really understood. I was able to turn on the generator whenever I asked, but to be honest even I wasn't very keen on this. It was a horrible smelly noisy thing that disrupted the tranquillo nature of the place whenever it booted into life. Usually it was only on from sunset until around 8.30pm. Also it was obvious that Julio, the manager, thought that my time would be more practically used doing more mundane tasks such as building and leaf sweeping. I didn't necessarily begrudge the requests that I work on these other jobs rather than on the editing etc I was trying to get done -I actually very much enjoy outdoor physical work- but I also knew that if I didn't get cracking on putting this album together then we would be there forever. And so I decided that it would be best to return to Rurrenabaque to work on the album there with constant electricity and without the distractions of the lifestyle of the lodge.

The annual San Miguel fiesta was coming up in a couple of days so we decided to stay for that before leaving. Would be nice to finish with a party and also good to get some more recordings of local musicians. The days leading up to this were very intense as a large group of biologists, 15 in total, were visiting the lodge to hold a convention. In fact they were affiliated with Conservation International, one of the funders of the lodge. It was a very big deal for the San Miguel project and as a result all hands were required on deck and we were asked to work extra hours. Sara cooking in the kitchen and me and the other volunteers doing extra cleaning,

wall painting etc. Kind of a pain in the arse really - in terms of how my project was proceeding. One day the biologists went upriver a way, and the lucky buggers saw a Jaguar on the river bank. They were a funny bunch, aid funders on a junket some of them. I got along best with the 3 or 4 Bolivian biologists who were part of the group, they were as interested in my project as I was in their work. The Europeans and Yanks seemed more than happy to treat us as servants.

The night of the fiesta arrived and what a party! We arrived way too early at 9pm. Luckily for me some of the local musos saw us there and brought down their instruments especially for me to record (I had recorded one of them a few days previous at the lodge). The local music is a chaotic joyous racket made with drums and bamboo flutes. Dominant instrument is ultra fast semi-martial snare drumming. Fuckin energetic musc. Anyway the sound of this started bringing some of the locals down, and unfortunately this led to calls that the generator be started and modern music be played on the PA. Luckily for me the generator broke down or ran out of fuel every so often and the old-timers' music would start up again. Boom boom boom of the bass drum with calls and shouts, the machine gun snare, the barely audible flute playing old old jungle melodies.

Everyone was dancing and the booze was free. Folks walking around amongst the crowd carrying jugs of potent chicha (masticated then fermented corn and sugar alcohol), or much more potently fanta mixed with 96percent "potable" industrial alcohol, and pouring it into little cups that were shared amongst everyone. Glad I had those hepatitis jabs! The drinks never stopped coming. Everyone dancing in this big old wall-less hall with a thatched roof, the recorded music on the PA distorted like crazy from sheer volume and torn speakers. I think it was 3 am before we finally snuck away to negotiate the snake infested river track back to the lodge.

Then bang! 7am and we have to get up because we're due to catch the boat back down to Rurrenabaque at 8 with the Conservation International folk. Actually feeling not so bad... Maybe that industrial alcohol's not as toxic as I'd thought it might be?

So back to town... And it seemed like a city after the quiet of the jungle. We'd gotten pretty used to the lifestyle out there. I had really enjoyed falling asleep exhausted every night under a mosquito net to the sound of insects. Waking with the sun. Rurrenabaque was a chaos of careening motorbikes and dust and noise - noise of shop radios, noise of drunken bars and truck horns.

We found a cheap hotel, only \$4 each a night and I settled straight in with the laptop. My main job out at the lodge had been cleaning up and editing the recordings. Actually got really good at using noise reduction filters etc. Quite a good skill to have I reckon - got to the stage where I can now isolate a single insect or bird out of a soundfield full of river noise and wind and lots of other insects etc. I was pleased with that. Obviously this wouldn't normally be my style - I'm a big fan of extraneous noise- but I thought for this project I should try and be as hi-fi and clear as possible.

So now I set about trying to work the recordings I'd selected into some sort of cohesive and interesting flow. I wanted it to have a sense of narrative, to capture over 35 mins what it's like to visit the San Miguel del Bala world. I also wanted it to work as an interesting and engaging piece of music. There was one track in particular that I made especially for myself though - myself and other noise drone fanatics.

At dusk the place would come alive with cicada and cricket sounds. These resonated at such a frequency that they produced virtual sine waves that sounded as much like microphonic feedback as anything. So I made one piece using all my isolated insects and various effects to create the dusk from hell. A huge immersive wall of menacing noise that x-fades into the real thing- a straight field recording of dusk insects. This is the piece that took the longest, days of work, and also the one that I suspect that the actual local folk like the least, but for me it represents the sheer spine tingling bliss that these dusk sounds induced in me. The other tracks are filmic. A journey up the river, a trip to the village, a day and night in the jungle. These are interspersed with flute and drum pieces played by the locals, and one played by me.

I had been working 9-10 hour days in our hotel for 5 or 6 days- Sara going slowly mad with boredom, and both us broiling in the muggy tropical heat (and getting virtually no sleep due to a spectacularly noisy nightclub - named "Bananas" (!) - over the road), when I got a visit from the manager of the San Miguel office and project. He wanted the laptop back. Yikes! I hadn't been told it was his personal laptop. I knew I still had at least a few days' work left and so we eventually negotiated a situation whereby I would work in the office from then on. To be honest this probably meant I got less done each day, what with the various distractions there (answering phone calls and emails when English was needed etc) but at least they got some idea of the amount of work I was actually putting in, the amount of time something like this takes. Sara came down each day and did some English tutoring for one of the guides. She was pleased to have something to do. Rurre isn't a big town and there's not a hell of a lot to do there.

Eric had suggested another project to follow on from this one, a project that I was even more excited about but I think it was just as well for Sara that it fell through. Eric's grandfather is an 80 year old shaman who lives 6 hours from Rurre by motorbike. Eric was keen that we go up to visit him and another shaman to record their traditional music. This music is an integral part of their magical tradition and each shaman specialises in a particular magical instrument. For Eric's grandfather this is bone flutes that he has made from various animals. The other shaman utilises violins that he makes from sacred animal parts and wood. Eric was keen to do this as he has already written a short book covering the history of these traditions and saw this as an opportunity to get at least some of it published, albeit in the form of liner notes. I was very excited by the idea as well, even by the part of simply riding a motorbike 6 hours into the jungle, but the project fell through when his grandfather decided that it would be inappropriate for their traditions to be recorded, let alone inscribed onto CDs to be distributed around the world. Can't really complain about his reasoning - for them the magic they work with is entirely of and about the place where it occurs- but it is sad somehow that this music/tradition will disappear from history without leaving a tangible trace, and probably very soon.

And so my project and my time in Rurre was finally finished with the completion, the sequencing and laying out of the final album. I was sad to leave, felt like I could have lived there for years. We'd gotten to develop good friendships over the month or so we were there. I even contemplated trying to move there permanently at one point.

Now, several months later I'm home in NZ and I'm looking at a leg covered in abscesses and ulcers that are the result of a sandfly bite I received whilst working there. Something of an unfortunate footnote but I should point out that this is a very rare disease even in the jungle and that it is simply unfortunate luck that I contracted this. Even having experienced this I would still happily return to Rurrenabaque and the San Miguel del Bala at the drop of a hat. With a stunningly beautiful and diverse natural environment and a fascinating culture and ultra laid back lifestyle it is one of the most wonderful places I have ever been. It was an honour to be able to work there and produce this album.

### Part III and final

#### **The story behind the release San Miguel de Bala chronicle by Antony Milton**

The annual San Miguel fiesta was coming up in a couple of days so we decided to stay for that before leaving, thinking that it would be nice to finish with a party and also good to get some more recordings of local musicians. The days leading up to this were very intense as a large group of biologists, 15 in total, were visiting the lodge to hold a convention. In fact they were affiliated with Conservation International, one of the funders of the lodge. It was a very big deal for the San Miguel project and as a result all hands were required on deck and we were asked to work extra hours. Sara cooking in the kitchen and me and the other volunteers doing extra cleaning, wall painting etc. Kind of a pain in the arse really - in terms of how my project was proceeding. One day the biologists went upriver a way, and the lucky buggers saw a Jaguar on the river bank. They were a funny bunch, aid funders on a junket most of them. Amongst the equipment we had hauled up to the lodge for them were several dozen cases of very expensive wine. I got along best with the 3 or 4 Bolivian biologists who were

part of the group, they were as interested in my project as I was in their work. The Europeans and Americans seemed more than happy to treat us as servants.

The night of the fiesta arrived and what a party! We arrived way too early at 9pm. Luckily for me some of the local musos saw us there and brought down their instruments especially for me to record (I had met and recorded one of them a few days previous at the lodge). The local music is a chaotic joyous racket made with drums and bamboo flutes. Dominant instrument is ultra fast semi martial snare drumming. Fucking energetic music accompanied by ecstatic whops and yells. Anyway the sound of this started bringing some of the locals down, and unfortunately this led to calls that the generator be started and modern music be played on the PA. Luckily for me the generator broke down or ran out of fuel every so often and the old timers music would start up again. Boom boom boom of the bass drum with calls and shouts, the machine gun snare, the barely audible flute playing old old jungle melodies.

Everyone was dancing, grandparents through to toddlers, and the booze was free. Folks took turns walking around the crowd carrying jugs of chicha (masticated then fermented corn and sugar alcohol), or the much more potent 96percent "potable" industrial alcohol cheap mixed with orange fizz -the favourite tipple in Bolivia- and pouring it into little cups that were shared amongst everyone. Everyone pissed and dancing in this big old wall-less hall with a thatched roof, the recorded music on the PA distorted like crazy from sheer volume and torn speakers. I think it was 3 am before we finally snuck away to negotiate the snake infested river track back to the lodge.

Then bang! 7am and we have to get up because we'd have to catch the boat back down to Rurrenabaque with the Conservation International folk. I was amazed to be actually feeling not so bad... Maybe that industrial alcohol's not as toxic as I'd thought it might be?

So back to Rurre... And it seemed like a city after the quiet of the jungle. We'd gotten pretty used to the lifestyle out there. I had really enjoyed falling asleep exhausted every night under a mosquito net to the sound of insects. Waking with the sun. Rurrenabaque was a chaos of careening motorbikes and dust and noise- noise of shop radios, noise of drunken bars and truck horns.

We found a cheap hotel, only \$4 each a night and I settled straight in with the laptop. In terms of crafting the final record I had so far been cleaning up and editing the recordings. One skill that I gained from this experience was learning how to use noise reduction filters etc. Quite a good skill to have I reckon - got to the stage where I can now isolate a single insect or bird out of a soundfield full of river noise and wind and lots of other insects etc. I was pleased with that. Obviously this wouldn't normally be my style -I'm a big fan of extraneous noise- but I thought for this project I should try and be as hi-fi and clear as possible.

So now I set about trying to work the recordings I'd selected into some sort of cohesive and interesting flow. I wanted it to have a sense of narrative, to capture over 35 mins what it's like to visit the San Miguel del Bala world. I also wanted it to work as an interesting and engaging composition. There was one track in particular that I made especially for myself however- myself and other noise/drone fans.

At dusk the place would come alive with cicada and cricket sounds. These resonated at such a frequency that they produced virtual sine waves that sounded as much like microphonic feedback as anything. So I made one piece using all my isolated insects and various effects to create the dusk from hell. A huge immersive wall of menacing noise that x-fades into the real thing- a straight field recording of dusk insects. This is the piece that took the longest, days of work, and also the one that I suspect that the actual local folk like the least, but for me it represents the sheer spine tingling bliss that these dusk sounds induced in me. The other tracks are filmic. A journey up the river, a trip to the village, a day and night in the jungle. These are interspersed with flute and drum pieces played by the locals, and one played by me.

I had been working 9-10 hour days in our hotel for 5 or 6 days - Sara going slowly mad with boredom, and both us broiling in the muggy tropical heat (and getting virtually no sleep due to a spectacularly noisy nightclub - named "Bananas"(!) - over the road), when I got a visit from the manager of the San Miguel office and project. He wanted the laptop back. Yikes! I hadn't been told it was his personal laptop. I knew I still had at least a few days' work left and so we eventually negotiated a situation whereby I would work in the office from then on. To be honest this probably meant I got less done each day, what with the various distractions there (answering phone calls and emails when English was needed etc) but at least they got some idea of the amount of work I was actually putting in, the amount of time something like this takes. Sara came down each day and did some English tutoring for one of the guides. She was pleased to have something to do. Rurre' isn't a big town and there's not a hell of a lot to do there.

Eric had suggested another project to follow on from this one, a project that I was even more excited about but I think it was just as well for Sara that it fell through. Eric's grandfather is an 80 year old shaman who lives 6 hours from Rurre by motorbike. Eric was keen that we go up to visit him and another shaman to record their traditional music. This music is an integral part of their magical tradition and each shaman specialises in a particular magical instrument. For Eric's grandfather this is bone flutes that he has made from various animals. The other shaman utilises 'violins' that he makes from sacred animal parts and wood. Eric was keen to do this as he has already written a short book covering the history of these traditions and saw this as an opportunity to get at least some of it published, albeit in the form of liner notes. I was very excited by the idea as well, even by the part of simply riding a motorbike 6 hours into the jungle, but the project fell through when his grandfather decided that it would be inappropriate for their traditions to be recorded, let alone inscribed onto CDs to be distributed around the world. Can't really complain about his reasoning -for them the magic they work with is entirely of and about the place where it occurs- but it is sad somehow that this music/tradition will disappear from history without leaving a tangible trace, and probably very soon.



And so my project and my time in Rurre' was finally finished with the completion, the sequencing and laying out of the final album. It was ultimately decided that it would make sense to make it a download with the money going to the community trust rather than my trying to send through a box of CDs (it was suggested there was something like a 10% chance of such a box surviving its transit through the Bolivian postal service). And that's where the album is now, floating around in the cloud and hopefully providing some small financial support to San Miguel del Bala - the village and its people. We'd been in the area for something like 5 weeks and it was the longest we spent in any one place in South America and the place where we got at least a small insight into what it would be like to live in such a community. It is also the place where I contracted the disease Leishmaniasis from the bite of a sandfly, but that is another story. I think it is the memories of this time that will last the longest from our year in South America.

Antony Milton

# Neda Mehrjoo

I met my mail art friend, Neda Mehrjoo, accidentally a few years ago through Facebook, thanks to our beloved mutual mail art friend, Rafael Gonzalez.

Since then we've been exchanging postcards frequently, enjoying the delay in the time it takes for mail to be delivered between our countries (Greece to Iran and vice versa), as it usually takes some two or three months for a letter to arrive.

A couple of months ago, while chatting about our news, I conducted this short interview around her work.



**- How was your interest in mail art born? How did you make your first contacts and decide to get in touch with them?**

I first got to know about Mail art and the IUOMA website (International Union of Mail-Artists) through Rafael Gonzalez. I was lucky enough to meet nice artists on Facebook. And in this way, I got to know the magic world of art. It was Rafael Gonzalez who suggested to me to make collages for the first time. You can say that I imitated and learned from his artistic style. And of course, I must admit that William Gaglione (aka Picasso Gaglione) encouraged me a lot, and I learned the idea of making stamps from him.

**-Do you use a certain technique (e.g. collage) or do you not have any rules and 'play' with various ideas (be it collage, stamps, paintings, etc)?**

It is not a long time that I've been doing art works. But I started my work by making collages and used different materials such as acrylic paint, Iranian calligraphy ink and other objects.

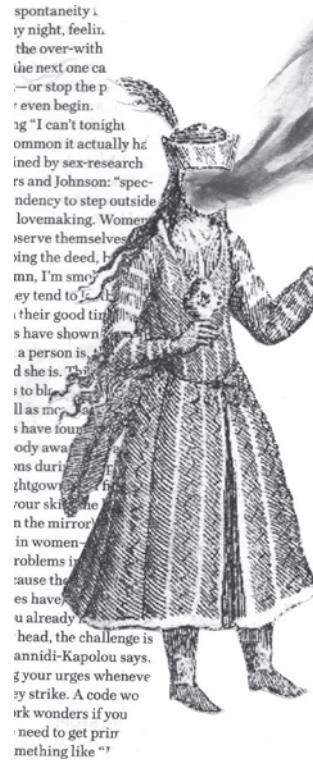
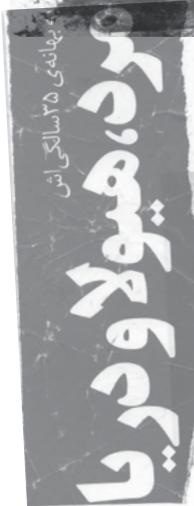
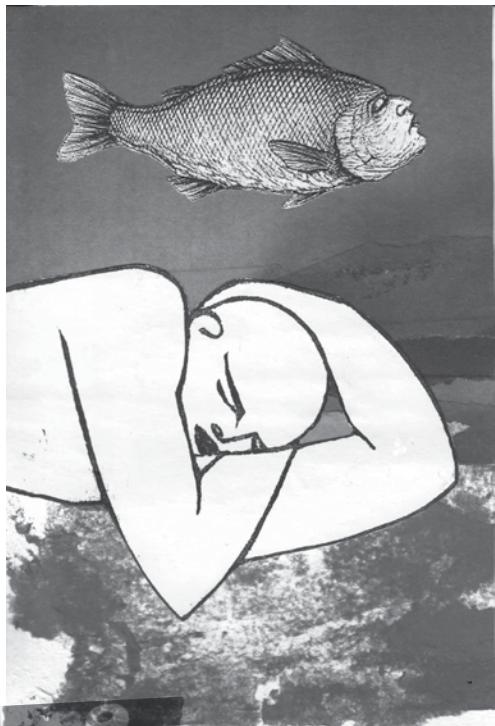
**-Where do you get inspiration from to compose your works? Your surroundings? Stories you might have heard, or do ideas come accidentally while working or thinking of an idea to work on?**

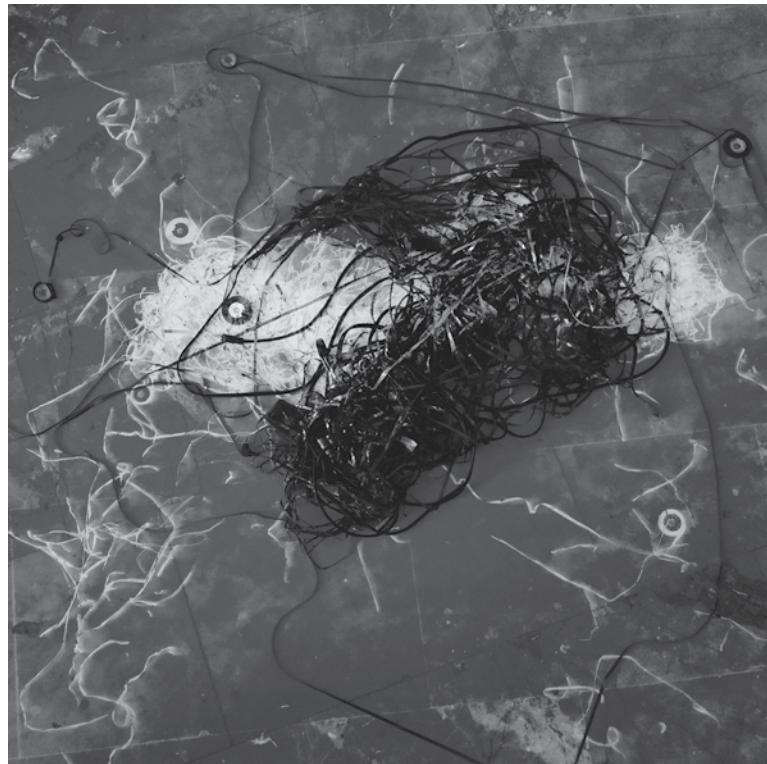
In making my stamps, I am inspired by the images of giants, angels, demons and old Iranian and Asian miniatures. I usually don't design the original images myself and get the main idea from old images in internet, books and etc. And I am trying to combine them with Iranian calligraphy and cultural elements.

My father, who had a very strong imagination in creating imaginary stories about aliens, talking animals and demons as my bedtime stories, and he always tried to draw their pictures while telling the stories .

I don't have any idea while making a collage or stamp. On the other hand, I usually have no idea what will become of a work I'm doing at the time. But it seems that women are the main issues of most of my works, maybe because in making art works, I leave my mind and heart free and the result is what you see at the end.

Neda Mehrjoo





# MIZI - Trials and Tribulations of Releasing Music

When an album goes public, there's a cumbersome process of planning and organising, that gives a certain sense of "formality" to the process. You have to write your press releases, organise your social media posts and stories, you have to take care of the distribution of the work, the liaising with media outlets, the physical media that embodies it, all the supplementary texts and visual artwork that comes with it. This is a multistep process that can take days, months, years, and usually the artist wants to be as off-hands as possible. This is where labels come into play; most of the underground labels that an experimental musician/sound artist will encounter provide assistance in this publishing process, hopefully while also engaging a wider audience. Finally, -if one's lucky enough- the label might even provide some money to master and produce physical copies of the work. But labels equal people and coordination, a high risk recipe, which combined with the timing required for a smooth album release (why's everybody releasing on Fridays? Is it because of the Bandcamp thing?) and extraneous factors of geopolitical nature, can potentially result in a hyper-volatile cocktail.

My track record with releases is not a good one. The debut album of my breaks/math band Central Pozitronics, was rocky to say the least. It took around 4 years for the LP to be recorded, mixed, produced, mastered, cut on vinyl and published. Our pressings, after a substantial delay, arrived at the peak of the COVID pandemic. Finally, after some deliberation, we decided to publish the record during the state-mandated lockdown. The official results of our release after two years? Numerous cardboard boxes filled with records reappropriated as speaker stands and coffee tables.

My other project Trigger Happy, an experimental quartet focusing on pointillistic music and sound collages has been struggling to produce a record for about 5 years now. As a matter of fact, I'm writing this article while taking a break from the cumbersome mastering process of the cheaply recorded, roughly mixed material of the group.

In between these projects I've been working diligently on releasing my first proper solo album based on the idea of "media rummaging" or "cracked media": repurposing, misusing and abusing obsolete media. I first got the idea for a cracked media setup and an album to go along with it around 2016-2017. I'd seen some tape loop videos, found a cheap ad for a Fostex 280 (around that time you could get 4-track machines for around 100-150 euros) and got on with it. Later, I added ways to probe the inner mechanisms of the media with contact mics and electromagnetic coils, and I also incorporated some discman players and a turntable into my setup. The creation process wasn't actually too bad, I composed the music to be played live so all I had to do for the record was recreate the pieces in the comfort of my home studio. I had total control of the mixing, the editing and the mastering of the album. I created a draft, got some feedback from some friends, reevaluated some compositional choices, added some "studio flavour" to the tracks and the work was ready! Breaking the pattern of endless mixing, recordings and unsatisfactory results, I was feeling quite confident. In fact, I was so confident that I started looking for a label to release my work.

I asked around, talked to some people in the local scene, and got introduced to Nicolas Malevitsis. I didn't know Nicolas at that time, but I found out that he was involved in several experimental Greek labels. We also shared a similar passion in daytime drinking, eating, and endlessly chatting shit. So when we got together, we really hit it off. He listened to the album and seemed genuinely interested in publishing it through his label noise-below. It seemed like things would start moving a bit faster than the general lethargic pace that I'm used to. The discussions about the release started in May-June 2019, and from early on there were disagreements. Nicolas wanted to remove one of my pieces from the album, or rather replace it with an older piece of mine that I had thought of including in the release. He also suggested cutting the last 5 minutes of the opening, defining track, titled Rummaging the

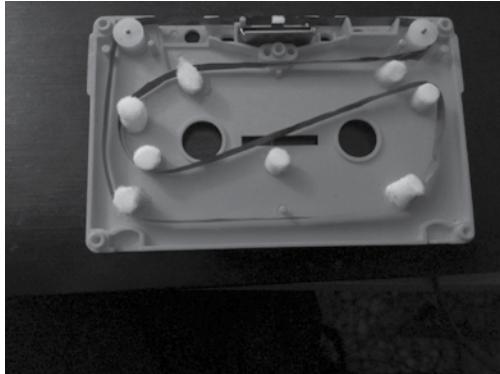
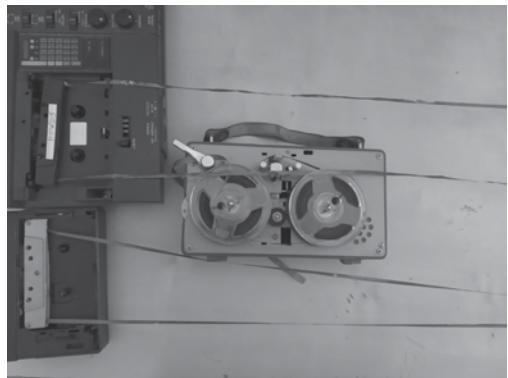
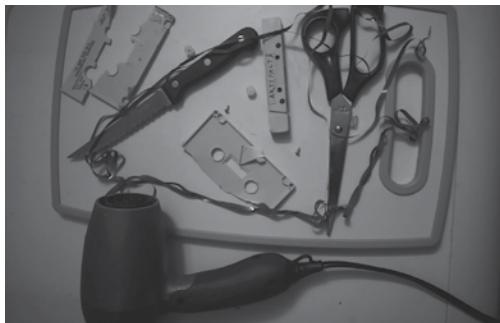
Medium. Although I had no intention of changing anything on the album, we continued working together, and after some back-and-forth we agreed to release the work as is. By this time communication slowed to a crawl, with some sporadic messages reassuring me that we would keep working on the release, but no actual work was done from either party. The last time we met was September 2019, we sat down and agreed on the final details around the spool time of the tape and the order of the tracks. After that meeting, a few stray messages were exchanged and communication halted altogether. Shortly thereafter, the pandemic hit.

During the spring of 2019 I had the chance to perform at Irtijal '19 in Beirut with Trigger Happy. It was the first time we were playing a show outside of Europe and we were very excited. Beirut truly is a remarkable place. Mind you, this was before the October 17 revolution, the 2020 Beirut explosion and the subsequent wave of poverty that followed. At our concert there was a group of people, cheering us on and whistling at every rest, gesture and transition of our set. This rowdy crowd were a group of Russians that travelled all the way from Moscow to attend Irtijal '19, and we instantly became friends. This is how I met Eugenie Galochkin. Again, our mutual love for sound collage, weird music and excessive drinking was the catalyst of our friendship. Returning home, we kept in contact and even made a couple of attempts to travel to Moscow and play at his Richterfest concerts, but unfortunately COVID complicated things in a major way. Bummed out, but still excited about the new links and friendship, I looked into his new experimental & improvisashhhhh label ТОПОТ. Through ТОПОТ I discovered a booming scene of experimental sound straight out of Moscow, having no prior knowledge about the Russian experimental scene, the new sounds and groups of the label excited me so much that I wanted to be part of the thing; after all, I still had an unreleased album sitting on my hard drive.

We started talks about releasing the album on ТОПОТ somewhere around late 2020 or early 2021. Eugenie had this tactic of cutting two batches of 20 cassettes for each release, after the first batch was sold out, the second one would get in production. I tried to convince him to do a larger batch, so they'd be able to send me some cassettes

over to Greece as well. After a lengthy back and forth, we decided on the details and... recession hit! Eugenie lost his job due to COVID, inflation hit Russia and the production of cassettes seemed impossible. The price of production was higher than the typical European prices, combined with the Russian Ruble losing value and the general economic turmoil, my plans on releasing the album were once again halted. I tried to talk with Eugenie, maybe I could contribute to the cost of the cassettes, or we could do a pre-order thing, but the situation had left him disheartened. Again I found myself in a situation of radio silence, with no way forward of releasing this god-forsaken collection of tracks.

Several months passed and I was about to send a message to Eugenie that I would start my search for a new label, or that I'd release the work myself, because by that time, the album had become an unnecessary weight. I wanted to create new things, I had new ideas that would not progress because I was waiting for my first release to go live. Eugenie contacted me first, he told me he was ready to release the album and put on the work, despite the recession and the general bad vibes in Moscow. He brought onboard Dima Shumov AKA BeeEcH BoizZz to take care of all our graphic design needs, the cassette inlay, the liner notes, the visuals for the social media promotion, even my profile picture and the cover art for my personal bandcamp. We worked really hard (especially Dima), on creating a special Russian edition of the release, with a greek-russian title (Музыка Behind Μουσική) and Russian translation for all the texts (many thanks to Oleg Krokhalev), Eugenie somehow managed to gather some money for the production of the tapes, and thinking that we'd learned from our past mistakes, we decided to not wait but release the album digitally and sell the tapes on pre-order while waiting for the cassettes to arrive. We readied all the little details about the release, set up the bandcamp on private, wrote our press releases, gathered the texts, even had an editorial text by Eugenie himself talking about how the album came to be. A couple of days before the release, 24 of February 2022, the Russian special military operation towards Ukraine began. The release had to be postponed yet again, most of the people from the Moscow scene that I knew fled to Armenia, Georgia and Israel, ТОПОТ became inactive and Eugenie fell into depression. A month passed



**MIZI**  
MUSIC BEHIND MUSIC

**OUT NOW**

T709T  
AVAILABLE ON [TAWPOT.BANDCAMP.COM](https://tawpot.bandcamp.com)  
COMING SOON ON CASSETTE  
TOPOT

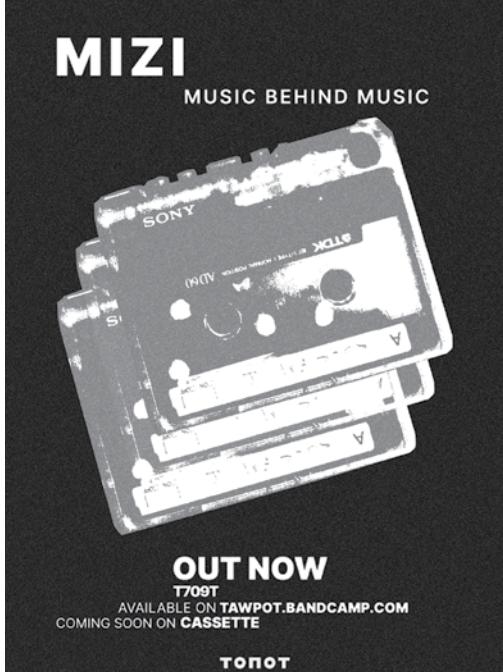
and with no meaningful change in the conflict, we decided that releasing the album and doing our thing would be an act of resistance/defiance rather than one of ignorance/arrogance and so we did. MIZI - Music Behind Music released on 27 of April 2022, 5 years after I started composing for it and after 3 years of endless obstacles and discussions with 2 different labels. Our bad luck does not end here though. When we released the work we hadn't realised that the Russian-Western state of affairs had changed radically, Russia was now facing a long list of sanctions and a boycott that we had thought would have nothing to do with us. Unfortunately, that was not the case.

The shutdown of the European airspace to Russian planes, meant that it was next to impossible to ship the tapes to Greece, or anywhere in Europe for that matter. Cargo and parcels now move only through long-haul trucks and (I think?) trains, which are unreliable at best. The SWIFT ban in Russia alongside the rest of the bans on online services caused a number of problems in the way the label ran their Bandcamp account. Bandcamp together with paypal froze all the money gained from transactions, which meant that any monetary gain

from my album, or any other ТОПОТ release for that matter is being withheld by Bandcamp and Paypal. Moreover, bandcamp does not allow selling your digital album or physical releases in Russian Ruble, making it impossible for Russians to pay the price for a digital album copy or a cassette due to the exchange rate and the rampant inflation of the currency. Lastly, we couldn't even have access to more free album codes to distribute to press and whatnot, because of the financial freeze. The label account was registered in Russia, meaning that any subterfuge of using a VPN, changing regions, etc. would have no effect. More or less, we were royally fucked.

It was so absurd that all we could do was laugh and devise new plans on how to combat the situation, the surreal nature of it all had actually a positive impact on our psyche. After some deliberation, we decided on our next moves: We set the price of the digital album to 'Name your price' so that Russians could have access and I asked Nikos Massaras, owner of 39Label, to collaborate with us and curate a European version of the release with a new Bandcamp page and a batch of tapes for the Greek/European audience. Finally, with the help of our graphic designer Dima, I got in touch with the awesome people @sleeponitpress and created a run of 30 high quality folded risograph prints of the album cover, the liner notes and a bandcamp code for the digital version of the album. The low-cost of the prints allowed me to sell them at the price of 5 euros. I thought it would be a nice in-between physical item until the European tapes arrived and had a couple of gigs lined-up, so I wanted to have something with me. A story as old as time (at least in the Greek scene), not only did I not sell anything after the gigs, but after the concert at the Ionian University AKOYSMATA festival, half the prints I had brought got nicked by people not realising I was selling them, although I explicitly said so after my concert was over.

Although this is a story where most of the things that could go wrong went wrong and maybe I come off as a man of constant sorrow, I want to asseverate that as the release, hopefully, finalises, and after all is said and done, I do look back at everything with positivity and a high spirit. Through our constant online communication, a firm bond has been created between me, Eugenie and Dima, I've also met a bunch of people from the underground Russian scene whose passion for sound amazes and inspires constantly and I've been able to maintain my friendship with Nicolas Malevitsis (you're hopefully reading this in his zine right now). Eugenie was able to produce a batch of tapes copied over old Russian tapes, capturing the essence of "cracked media", and he's distributing them in person at various festivals and underground concerts in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Releasing your music is always a lot of work, and organising you will always stumble on hurdles and you will be frustrated, but in the end it's worth the effort. Just maybe avoid doing it on a Russian label during fucking wartime.



**MIZI**  
MUSIC BEHIND MUSIC

**OUT NOW**  
T709T  
AVAILABLE ON [TAWPOT.BANDCAMP.COM](https://tawpot.bandcamp.com)  
COMING SOON ON CASSETTE

**ΤΩΠΟΤ**

MIZI - Music Behind Music is out on tape and as a digital album on ΤΩΠΟΤ buy at your own risk: <https://tawpot.bandcamp.com/album/music-behind-music>



The european release will launch in September 2022 at <https://mizithras.bandcamp.com/releases>





Who would ever think of pulling a boat over a hill  
with the help of humans?

This is an act of absurdity in itself, one that very few people will realise and a lot fewer will materialise in the course of their life. Fitzcaraldo's love of opera is symbolic, it can be anyone's opera that will drive a person to absurdity, but just like in the film, sometimes that love is strong enough to make miracles happen.

Yannis Iasonidis  
(orilarecords.bandcamp.com)